

## Federal Funding for Christiansburg Institute (January 26, 2006)

Christiansburg, Virginia

I am pleased to visit Christiansburg today to announce the provision of federal funding to construct the Trades Learning Center on the former campus of the Christiansburg Institute. At my request, the U. S. Department of Agriculture through its Rural Development Agency is providing a low-interest loan in the amount of \$1.6 million to Christiansburg Institute, Incorporated for the construction of the Center, which will provide vocational training in traditional building trades to students in the New River Valley.

The Christiansburg Institute was the first high school for African-American students in Southwest Virginia. Founded in 1866 by Union Army Captain Charles Schaeffer, the school garnered a reputation for academic excellence and served students in the New River Valley for a century before closing in 1966. The Institute was the first high school in Montgomery County to receive accreditation with the Virginia public school system.

A great number of Christiansburg Institute Alumni have founded successful businesses in the New River Valley. Others have served in distinguished roles such as Executive Vice President of the Mountain Empire Blue Cross-Blue Shield and President of Bell Atlantic Video Broadcasting Services. Joe Sheffey, alumni and current Chair of the Christiansburg Institute, Inc. Board of Directors, serves as the Chair of the Pulaski County Board of Supervisors.

The Christiansburg Institute Alumni Association has a membership of more than 1,300 former students across the United States, and in 1996, the Christiansburg Institute Alumni Association founded Christiansburg Institute, Inc. The mission of the organization is to preserve the unique history of the Christiansburg Institute and to promote its legacy of accessible education.

In November 2000, I announced a federal appropriation in the amount of \$300,000 to Christiansburg Institute, Inc. for the restoration of the Edgar A. Long Building and for the development of the four acres on which we now stand. The restoration, which is now underway, will enable the Christiansburg Institute to display exhibits that have been developed in partnership with the Virginia Foundation for the Humanities, Virginia Tech, and other Virginia colleges and universities.

The funding which I am announcing today will enable Christiansburg Institute, Inc. to construct a Trades Learning Center on this site. The Center will reflect the original Industrial Trades school at the Institute, which was supervised by Booker T. Washington and trained students in trades such as masonry, carpentry, and blacksmithing. The new Trades Learning Center will provide vocational training in the traditional building trades. Christiansburg Institute, Inc. plans to use the

Center to develop partnerships with existing workforce development education programs.

The new 9,000 square foot Trades Learning Center will be located here on the southern edge of the Christiansburg Institute campus on Scattergood Drive, and it will compliment the historic architecture of the Edgar A. Long Building. The Center will include three spaces for state-of-the-art workshops or studios, each equipped with an outdoor demonstration area for live trade demonstrations. The workshops will be equipped for wet, dry, and hot working conditions and will feature large doors and high ceilings to accommodate a range of equipment.

I am pleased that the federal government has honored our request to invest in this worthwhile project. The construction of the Trades Learning Center is the next step in the revitalization of the Christiansburg Institute and will provide a valuable resource for the region.

This morning, I would like to recognize the outstanding work of several individuals who contributed to this success.

I commend Joe Sheffey, Chairman of the Christiansburg Institute Board of Directors, and Jacqueline Eaves, President of the Christiansburg Institute Alumni Association, and other members of these boards for their work to revitalize the Christiansburg Institute. I would also like to recognize Elaine Carter, Executive Director of Christiansburg Institute, Inc., for her efforts to promote and preserve the legacy of the Christiansburg Institute.

I also want to recognize the local government leaders of Christiansburg, Blacksburg, Montgomery County and Radford for their support of this project.

I want to extend my thanks to Linda DiYorio, my recently retired District Director, and Courtney Lamie from my staff for their persistent and persuasive efforts on behalf of this project.

Finally, I want to say a special word of thanks to Travis Jackson, Area Director for the United States Department of Agriculture's Rural Development Agency, for his support of this project and his able assistance in the funding application process.

I congratulate these community leaders on the continuing success of the Christiansburg Institute revitalization. The Institute is already providing a valuable educational and cultural service, and it will be able to offer far more when the Trades Learning Center is completed.